CLAIMS

Having thus described our invention, what we claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent is:

1. A method for multicasting a message to agents, comprising the steps of:

receiving a packet comprising a message and preferential destination information designated by a user;

determining to which agents said message is to be sent, by referring to said preferential destination information; and

sending said message to the agents determined as destinations.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein said determining step further comprises a step of: referring to messaging policy data defining priorities of agents to which said message can be sent.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein said messaging policy data is defined for each type of message.

4. The method according to claim 2, wherein said messaging policy data defines the number of agents which receive the message for each type of message.

5. The method according to claim 2, wherein said determining step further comprises a step of: using said priorities of agents defined in said messaging policy data and pairs of agent names and priorities included in said preferential destination information to determine destination agents from an agent having highest priority.

6. The method according to claim 1, further comprising a step of: sending information concerning agents which are not determined as destination agents and said message to a representative agent which represents agents to which said message can be sent.

7. The method according to claim 2, further comprising a step of: sending information concerning agents which are not determined as destination agents and said message to a representative agent which represents agents to which said message can be sent.

8. The method according to claim 6, wherein said representative agent generates a response message for a source agent of a message, by referring to information from preregistered agents to which said message can be sent.

9. The method according to claim 7, wherein said representative agent generates a response message for a source agent of a message, by referring to information from preregistered

agents to which said message can be sent.

10. A computer comprising:

an execution environment for agents; and

a message monitor for receiving a packet, comprising a message and preferential destination information designated by a user, from an agent being active in the execution environment for said agents, and for determining to which agent said message is to be sent by referring to said preferential destination information, and for sending said messages to the agents determined as destination agents.

11. The computer according to claim 10, further comprising: a storage device storing a messaging policy data defining priorities of agents to which said message can be sent.

12. The computer according to claim 11, wherein said message monitor determines, by using said priorities of agents defined in said messaging policy data and pairs of agent names and priorities included in said preferential destination information, destination agents from an agent having highest priority.

13. The computer according to claim 10, wherein said message monitor sends information concerning agents which are not determined as destination agents and said message to a representative agent which represents agents to which said message

can be sent.

14. The computer according to claim 11, wherein said message monitor sends information concerning agents which are not determined as destination agents and said message to a representative agent which represents agents to which said message can be sent.

15. A storage medium for storing a program executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform method steps for multicasting a message to agents, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a packet comprising a message and preferential destination information designated by a user;

determining to which agents said message is to be sent, by referring to said preferential destination information; and

sending said message to the agents determined as destinations.

16. The storage medium according to claim 15, wherein said determining step comprises a step of: referring to a messaging policy data defining priorities of agents to which said message can be sent.

17. The storage medium according to claim 15, wherein said program further comprises a step of: sending information concerning agents which are not determined as destinations and said

message to a representative agent which represents agents to which said message can be sent.

18. The storage medium according to claim 16, wherein said program further comprises a step of: sending information concerning agents which are not determined as destinations and said message to a representative agent which represents agents to which said message can be sent.

19. A method for multicasting a message to agents, comprising the steps of:

receiving a message;

determining to which agents said message is to be sent, by referring to a messaging policy data defining priorities of agents to which said message can be sent; and

sending said message to the agents determined as destinations.

20. A storage medium for storing a program for causing a machine to execute the steps of a method for multicasting a message to an agent, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a message;

determining to which agents said message is to be sent, by referring to a messaging policy data defining priorities of agents to which said message can be sent; and

sending said message to the agents determined as destinations.